

Tenant Advocacy Work Group
Orientation Session – Oct. 28, 2008

Summary Notes from Group Session

How will we work together? Handle conflict? Assure work credibility?

Group 1

- Establish ground rules: trust, respect. People should feel free to express their opinions/ideas
- Disagreements: write up a minority report; deal with decisions by voting, but the final product should reflect the minority view
- Reliable, factual information
- Get input from entire County (AIM, Up County regional center, Gaithersburg)
- Look at available sources including other groups
- Identify issues
- Plan meeting content in advance so members can be prepared
- Issues: physical aspects of community, lighting, traffic lights; crime – police presence; creating safe environments; dialogue with police on issues that impact, even those that are not life-threatening
- Group facilitation to stay on track
- Circulate agenda in advance so group can come to meetings prepared; topical agendas
- Identify “Top Issues”
- Stay solution-oriented in discussions

Group 2

- Write down members’ points
- Identify baseline positions
 - Find common ground
- Fact based information
- Not get mired in individual complaints – elevate to the larger policy issue
- Civility of the serious disagreement
- Mission statement is your mantra
- Plea for staying on the issue
- Not reach for the stars: achievability
- Be prepared for meeting
- Task responsibility; communication discipline; responsiveness
- Share the floor; everyone as an active referee
- Role of the Chair – wearing different hats
- Public/press can attend/listen but not participate directly in meetings
- Use of outside experts

Group 3

- Start by defining problems/issues; eg: affordability – what is the magnitude of the problem?
- Focus on finding common ground on difficult issues
- Present a series of alternatives (and their impacts) when we cannot agree on one answer
- Recognize our limitations – we are not representative, so we need to seek out other viewpoints
- Best practices – what is impact of programs on community
- Respect different opinions

Common themes included:

- Focus on finding common ground when members have different opinions
- Begin process by identifying issues and then prioritizing them
- Be aware of the group's limitations and concentrate on achievable goals
- Create an environment that fosters full participation by all members